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PACKAGING FOR DOG TREATS

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to packaging, and, more specifically, to animal food packaging.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Animal treats, such as dog treats, are commonly packaged in bags or boxes for distribution through supermarkets and pet food stores. At the same time, patrons of coffee outlets and coffee stands often are walking their dogs when they purchase coffee beverages and have a desire to purchase dog treats for their accompanying pet. Current packaging for dog treats is not standardized or adapted for convenient handling at coffee outlets, or for easy distribution with coffee beverages.

Accordingly, there is an unmet need in the art for animal treat packaging that is convenient and configured for ease of distribution at coffee outlets.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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The invention provides a lightweight standardized and uncomplicated system and method for packaging animal treats. The package includes a coffee cup defining an inside volume to receive the animal treats and including a rim surrounding an upper end of the inside volume. A lid is removably fastened to the rim of the coffee cup, the lid adapted to at least partially cover the dog treats. In another embodiment of the present invention the

coffee cup is sealed with a removable seal and in a further embodiment of the present invention the dog treats are bagged prior to being placed within the coffee cup.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 The preferred and alternative embodiments of the present invention are described in detail below with reference to the following drawings.

FIGURE 1 is a cross section of a coffee cup package of the present invention;

FIGURE 2 is a cross section of an alternate coffee cup package of the present invention;

10 FIGURE 3 is a cross section of a second alternate coffee cup package of the present invention; and

FIGURE 4 is a flow chart of an exemplary method of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

15 The present invention relates to apparatus and methods for packaging animal treats. Many specific details of certain embodiments of the invention are set forth in the following description and in FIGURES 1-4 to provide a thorough understanding of such embodiments. One skilled in the art, however, will understand that the present invention may have additional embodiments, or that the present invention may be practiced without several of the details described in the following description.

20 FIGURE 1 shows a cross section of an exemplary animal treat package 10 of the present invention. The package 10 includes a coffee cup 20 at least partially filled with animal treats 5, in this example dog treats. The coffee cup 20 has a rim 22. By way of example but not limitation, the coffee cup 20 includes a standard disposable paper coffee cup of a normal size, such as an 8 oz cup, a 12 oz cup, or a 20 oz cup. The animal treats 5 within the cup 20 are at least partially covered by a lid 30 attached to the cup 20. In this exemplary
25 embodiment, the lid 30 includes a standard disposable plastic coffee cup lid that snaps to the cup 20. The lid 30 snaps to the cup 20 with a snap lip 32 that fits over the rim 22 of the cup 20.

30 It will be appreciated that the package 10 of FIGURE 1 suitably is of a standard size and dimension for convenient handling at a coffee outlet. Coffee cups may be placed within cup holders or carriers (not shown) when a purchaser buys a plurality of coffee beverages and/or animal treat packages such as the package 10 of FIGURE 1. The package 10 may be at least partially filled with animal treats 5 either before purchased by a purchaser, or at the time of purchase from a dispenser (not shown) at the coffee outlet. Coffee outlets typically work with standard sized coffee cups 20 and standard sized disposable lids 30. Thus, the

handling of the package 10 of the present invention is advantageously convenient and consistent with current packaging practices at coffee outlets.

Turning to FIGURE 2, an alternate exemplary package 50 of the present invention is shown. The package 50 includes a coffee cup 60. In this exemplary embodiment, the cup 60 is sealed with a removable seal 65. The coffee cup 60, as described with respect to FIGURE 1 is partially filled with dog treats 5. The cup 60 suitably may include a paper or plastic disposable coffee cup. The cup 60 includes a rim 62. The seal 65 covers the coffee cup 60 by being attached to the rim 62. In this example embodiment, the seal 65 is attached to the rim 62 with a heat activated adhesive 67. The seal 65 suitably, by way of example, but not limitation, may include a foil material, or a heat shrinkable plastic.

In this package 50, the seal 65 includes a pull tab 69 arranged to be pulled by a user to remove the seal 65 from the cup 60.

The package 50 includes a lid 70 that caps the cup 60. As described with respect to FIGURE 1, the lid 70, by way of example but not limitation, includes a snap lip 70 that snaps over the rim 62 of the cup 60. With the lid 70 snapped over the rim 62, the pull tab 69 suitably extends below the snap lip 70 so that the pull tab 69 for the seal 65 is visible to the end user even when the lid 70 is in place on the cup 60.

FIGURE 3 is a cross section of a second exemplary package 80 of the present invention. By way of example, but not limitation, in the second alternate package 80, the animal treats 5 are enclosed within a bag 95 held within a coffee cup 90. The bag 95 suitably may be a plastic, foil or cellophane bag sealed at its ends 97 with heat seal closures. In this package 80, the bag 95 of dog treats 5 is placed within the cup 90. Then, as described with respect to FIGURES 1 and 2, a lid 100 is snapped onto the cup 90. The lid 100 includes a snap lip 102 that snaps over the rim 92 of the cup 90. It will be appreciated that bagging the animal treats 5 suitably allows the animal treats 5 to be sealed in individual portion sizes and shipped separately from the cup 90 and the lid 100 with the cup 90 and lid 100 shipped in nested configurations, reducing shipping and storage volume. For display, on-the-shelf storage, and sale to the end user, the bag 95 of dog treats 5 may be suitably placed within the cup 90 and the lid 100 snapped on at, for example, a coffee outlet.

FIGURE 4 is a flow chart of an exemplary method 200 of packaging animal treats of the present invention. At a block 210 dog treats are loaded into a coffee cup. It will be appreciated that animal treats other than dog treats may be packaged utilizing the method and apparatus of the present invention.

At a block 220 the treats are sealed from the atmosphere such as by applying a seal to a coffee cup lip as described with respect to FIGURE 2 above, or by bagging, as described

with respect to FIGURE 3 above. While sealing in this exemplary method 200 is shown after loading the treats into the coffee cup at a block 210, sealing may suitably occur prior to loading of the coffee cup with animal treats, or sealing may be omitted if the animal treats are packed fresh.

5 After the treats are sealed at a block 220, the coffee cup lid is applied at a block 230. By way of example and not limitation, the lid may be applied to the coffee cup by snapping it on the coffee cup utilizing the configuration described above with reference to FIGURES 1-3.

10 While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, as noted above, many changes can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is not limited by the disclosure of the preferred embodiment. Instead, the invention should be determined entirely by reference to the claims that follow.